

# **Emotional Intelligence in the K-12 Curriculum and its Relationship to American Workplace Needs: A Literature Review**

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*The purpose of this paper was to review the content of existing social-emotional learning (SEL) programs in the American K-12 curriculum and the relationship between the programs and the needs of the American workplace. SEL programs were examined for their content and compared to the research indicating critical EI skills for the workplace. Several gaps in SEL education were identified including self-management, stress management, and mood regulation.*

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Social and Emotional Learning

Emotional intelligence (EI) has been studied intensively during the past several decades, particularly its application in the workplace (Cherniss, 2000; Goleman, 1995, 1998; Salovey and Mayer, 1990). Researchers have advanced beyond early ways of perceiving emotions which characterized thinking and feeling as polar opposites and emotion as something chaotic and immature and not capable of assisting reason (Salovey and Sloukyter, 1997). Current research examines EI definitions and the concept as related to leadership effectiveness and performance (Lusch and Serpkenci, 1990; McClelland, 1998; (Megerian & Sosik, 1999). Goleman (1998) found that EI abilities account for more than 85% of the difference between effective top leaders and non-effective leaders' performance and that IQ, traditionally thought to be one of the most powerful predictors of success, accounts for few of the factors that determine work success. While the efficacy of Goleman's theory and EI have been questioned (Clarke, 2006, Zeidner et. al. 2004), research evidence from industry, government, and other organizations indicates that increasing numbers of organizations are benefiting from EI competency applications (Hay Group, 2004). A survey of benchmark practices among major corporations found that four out of five companies are now trying to promote EI in their organizations (Zeidner, et. al., 2004)

With this new perspective, American companies are spending increasing amounts of money to develop employees' EI skills, growing EI "into a multimillion dollar training industry" (McEnrue & Groves, 2006, P. 9). Thus it seems that the majority of research and organizations believe that EI skills are critical.

Yet while American companies are allotting significant amounts of their budget to this cause, the school systems are still in the beginning stages. It may be that even with the research base indicating the importance of EI for career success, school system administrators may still perceive emotion and intelligence as adversarial concepts. This is problematic because research also suggests that learning new skills, such as EI, is easier when one is young (Goleman, 1997). Thus it seems critical to review the efforts toward developing EI in the school system, which is both a workplace in and of itself, and a foundational learning environment for future employees.

There are EI programs in place in innovative school systems. These are most often referred to as SEL, social and emotional learning programs. They are developed based on local needs and therefore differ greatly from one another. They are still infantile in any potential large -scale national effort to implement a school-to-work EI program. Given the emergent state of EI training as part of the school curriculum, it seems critical to examine the connection between school curriculum and future workplace needs in the area of EI.

The purpose of this paper is to review the content of existing social-emotional learning programs in the American K-12 curriculum and the relationship between school-based programs and the needs of the American workplace. This is done in order to identify the gaps to be filled by human resource development and training programs.

## **Methodology**

The author conducted a literature review of empirical and research-based articles to understand the theoretical and conceptual aspects of EI. In addition the author reviewed findings regarding specific EI skills found to be associated with success in the workplace. The research in this area was organized according to categories of skills and presented as such.

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The other area of literature reviewed was that of social and emotional learning (SEL) programs. Information on SEL programs was derived from multiple avenues including academic journals, books, and a relevant website. The research in both areas was compared to determine whether there was any overlap or if there were gaps in education between the EI skills identified as necessary and those that were found to be taught in SEL programs. Gaps in the programs were identified and recommendations were made for HRD and teachers based on these findings.

### **Emotional intelligence defined**

Given that the theoretical framework of this paper is EI, it is important to review its definition. There are several variations of definitions, depending on the author and his or her affiliation with the ability-based or trait-based definition of EI. Mayer, et.al. (2000) distinguish between ability models, focusing on aptitude for processing emotional information, and mixed models that conceptualize EI as a diverse construct, including aspects of personality as well as the ability to perceive, assimilate, understand, and manage emotions. These mixed models include traits such as self-concept, assertiveness, and empathy (Bar-On, 1997; Goleman, 1995).

Salovey and Mayer coined the term EI in 1990. Their preferred definition is "the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth." (Mayer and Salovey, 1997, p. 5) Goleman (1995, 1998), who views EI from the trait perspective, popularized the concept and applied it to the workplace. He discussed the importance of EI for success and claimed that the impact of EI is even greater within top levels of leadership. The popular and influential account offered by Goleman (1995) appears to define EI by exclusion: as any desirable feature of personal character not represented by cognitive intelligence.

Mayer, Salovey & Caruso (2000) described EI as comprising four levels of abilities that range from basic psychological processes to more complex processes integrating emotion and cognition. The model is developmental: the complexity of emotional skill grows from the first tier to the fourth, and skill in the first is required in order to possess the skills of the next levels. The first level, emotional perception, includes skills that allow an individual to perceive, appraise, and express emotions. These abilities include identifying one's own and other's emotions, expressing one's own emotions, and discriminating the expressions of emotion in others. The second level, emotional integration/facilitation, involves emotions facilitating and prioritizing thinking. Emotions enter the cognitive system, are recognized and labeled, and subsequently alter thought. The cognitive system can then view things from different perspectives.

The third level is emotional understanding and reasoning. At this level emotional signals are understood, along with their implications. These implications, such as feeling or meaning, are then considered. The fourth level, emotional management, involves an openness to emotions which allows personal and intellectual growth. This level of EI is more complex, with skills that allow individuals to selectively engage in or detach from emotions and to monitor and manage emotions in themselves and in others (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2000).

Another approach, moving beyond a rigid conceptualization of EI, advocates distinguishing between EI (as an ability) and emotional competencies (learned capabilities) (Goleman, 2001). Goleman (1998; 2001) concluded that the major qualities differentiating successful from unsuccessful executives are the competencies underlying EI. The less successful executives have poorer emotional control, despite strengths in cognitive abilities and technical expertise. The author stated that emotional competencies are learned capabilities, based on EI, that result in outstanding performance at work (Goleman, 2001).

Table 1 outlines the foundational mainstream definitions of emotional intelligence (Opengart, 2005).

**Table 1: Definitions of emotional intelligence**

Salovey and Mayer	Goleman/Cherniss	Bar-On
The emotional intelligence system is:	Emotional intelligence includes:	Emotional intelligence is: "an array of noncognitive abilities, competencies, and skills..."
The capacity to process information and reason with emotion.	Self-Awareness Self-Regulation Self-Motivation	Intrapersonal EQ
To perceive emotion	Social Awareness	Interpersonal EQ
To integrate it into thought	Social Skills	Adaptability EQ
To understand		Stress Management EQ
To manage emotion		General Mood EQ

## **Emotional intelligence and its importance for work success**

The research provides multiple examples of the importance of EI in order to be successful at work. There are several themes under which the research in EI and work success can be grouped, including leadership, self-awareness, empathy, mood regulation in oneself and others, and stress management. Many authors have described competencies they claim to be critical for success in occupational settings. The specific competencies claimed to be of critical importance are the following:

### *Leadership and motivational tendencies*

Evidence suggests that emotionally intelligent leadership results in improved business performance (Goleman, 2001). One author (McClelland, 1998) studied division heads of a global food and beverage company and found that the divisions of the leaders with strengths in EI competencies outperformed yearly revenue targets by 15 to 20 percent. Several researchers have shown relationships between EI and transformational leadership skills (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2002; Barling et al., 2000; Gardner & Stough, 2002; Sivanathan & Fekken, 2002). Transformational leaders project a vision for, inspire, and motivate their followers. Leaders that can recognize and manage their own and others' emotions will be more successful (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2002).

### *Self-awareness*

Self-awareness refers to the identification of emotion and understanding how emotions are related to one's goals, thoughts, behaviors, and accomplishments (Goleman, 1998; Weisinger, 1998). One study indicated that managers with self-awareness are rated as more effective by both superiors and subordinates than those managers without self-awareness (Megerian & Sosik, 1999). Church (1997) found that leader self-awareness resulted in greater performance and that self-monitoring of emotions was positively related to self-awareness. Shipper and Dillard (1994) attributed leaders' failures to lack of self-awareness. Self-awareness is also thought to be the foundational competency upon which others develop (Cherniss & Goleman, 2006).

### *Social awareness and empathy*

Empathy, one of the aspects of EI as defined by Goleman, has been described as particularly important (Cherniss, 2000). Empathy and social awareness include awareness of others' feelings, needs, and concerns, understanding and sympathizing with others' emotions, and responding to others' unspoken feelings (Goleman, 1998; Huy, 1999; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Pilling and Eroglu's 1994 survey of retail sales buyers found that sales representatives were most valued for their empathy. Studies have shown that empathy is related to leadership emergence in self-managed teams (Kellett, Humphrey, & Sleeth, 2002; Wolff, Pescosolido, & Druskat, 2002). Empathic leaders with sensitivity have more superior job performance, particularly with jobs that require interactions with people (McBane, 1995; Spencer & Spencer, 1993) and a supportive relationship increases followers' positive perceptions and feelings about the leader, as well as job satisfaction (Haddad & Samarneh, 1999).

### *Self-management/mood regulation*

This competence involves intentionally eliciting and sustaining pleasant and unpleasant emotions when considered appropriate, effectively channeling negative affect, and restraining negative emotional outbursts and impulses (Boyatzis, 1982; Goleman, 1998). Isen (2001) suggested that positive affect enhances problem solving and decision-making. Staw and Barsade (1993) found that people with stable and positive dispositions make more accurate decisions and improve interpersonal performance. They also suggested that affect may be a useful predictor of organizational performance. Mittal and Ross (1998) indicated the possibility that people in a positive mood are more likely to see opportunities in problems.

### *Identifying and regulating emotions in others/social skills*

This competence incorporates influencing others, effectively communicating with others, and managing conflicts (Weisinger, 1998). Influence, which means being skilled at winning over others, tuning presentations to appeal to the listener, and ability to build support, is one of the competencies that most strongly distinguish superior managers from others (Cherniss & Adler, 2000).

### *Stress management*

EI is claimed to influence one's ability to cope with environmental demands and pressures (Bar-On, 1997). Lusch and Serpkenci's 1990 study of retail store managers concluded that inner-directed managers, those who perceive events in their lives as being a consequence of their own actions and therefore controllable, cope with stress much better than those who are other-directed.

In sum, research indicates the EI skills that are most valued for workplace and leadership success to include leadership, self-awareness, social awareness/empathy, stress management, and self-management/mood regulation.

## **K-12 SEL programs**

A driving force behind the development of SEL programs is CASEL, The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. The goals of this organization include to "advance the science of social and emotional learning (SEL), expand coordinated, evidence-based SEL practice, and build a sustainable and collaborative organization to accomplish" their mission. CASEL defines SEL as

the process of acquiring the skills to recognize and manage emotions, develop caring and concern for others, make responsible decisions, establish positive relationships, and handle challenging situations effectively. . . Social and emotional education is a unifying concept for organizing and coordinating school-based programming that focuses on positive youth development, health promotion, prevention of problem behaviors, and student engagement in learning (CASEL website).

Extensive research has demonstrated that SEL competencies can be taught as part of a school-based curriculum (McNeely et. al, 2002; Osterman, 2000), that they can promote children's social and emotional adjustment (Lopes & Salovey, 2004), and that they enhance school performance (Barchard, 2003; Fleming, et. Al., 2005; Gumora et. al., 2002; Linares, et.al., 2005).

Different goals and assumptions make it difficult for researchers and practitioners to agree on key skills to focus on in SEL programs. Some authors argue that there is no obvious curriculum because of cultural differences and uncertainty about what challenges children will face in the future (Lopes & Salovey, 2004). CASEL defines the necessary SEL competencies to include the following: self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Payton (2000) identified four areas as critical for SEL programs including self and other awareness, positive values and attitudes, responsible decision-making, and social interaction skills. SEL curriculum decisions have tended to be made based on consensual goals and values and anticipation of future needs and challenges (Lopes & Salovey, 2004). The best programs emphasize particular skills, choose skills that can generalize, and rely on informal learning (Lopes & Salovey, 2004).

Some authors suggest that there may not be enough time to teach all the skills in the classroom, or that it is not possible to teach everything about social and emotional skills through explicit instruction. Therefore personal experience and practice, teaching a broad set of competencies, and relying on informal learning may be necessary (Lopes & Salovey, 2004). In fact, informal learning has been demonstrated to be a main source of learning about emotional expression in the workplace (Opengart, 2003).

Most SEL programs combine a number of elements yet have common themes including cooperative experiences, social skills training such as conflict resolution, and civic values (Johnson & Johnson, 2004). One such program, The Three C's program, is based on social interdependence and conflict theories and teaches cooperative community, constructive conflict resolution, and civic values. These three C's are needed in order for children to develop skills in relationships and emotions, responsibility, and problem-solving (Johnson & Johnson, 2004).

Another program, Social Decision Making and Social Problem Solving (SDM/SPS) emphasizes self-control, social awareness and group participation, and critical thinking. It is aimed at improving childrens' social decision making ability and interpersonal behavior. The self-control unit includes skills such as listening, turn taking, remembering, and following directions. The social awareness unit teaches the importance of positive emotion and appreciation for others, group building, expressing feelings, characteristics of friendship, and being and choosing a good friend. Children involved in the program derived many benefits including: greater sensitivity to others' feelings, better understanding of consequences of behavior, higher self-esteem, positive prosocial behavior, lower levels of antisocial and self-destructive behavior, and improvement in academic areas, self-control, social awareness, social decision making and problem solving (Elias, 2004). A recent program site showed significant pre- post gains with regard to the acquisition of skills in interpersonal sensitivity, problem analysis, and planning (Elias, 2004).

Many SEL programs focus on prevention. For example, the Seattle Social Development Project (SSDP) is a preventive intervention program for elementary students focusing on strengthening prosocial involvement and childrens' bonds to school and family. It is thought that positive involvement in school and family sets them on a positive developmental course because the bond increases positive choices and commitment to schooling and academic success. Teachers were trained in proactive classroom management and students engaged in cooperative training of social competencies including interpersonal cognitive problem-solving, building communication, decision-making, negotiation, and conflict resolution skills. Older students were taught refusal skills to help them resist negative social influences. Parents were also offered training in order to support student development. Studies of the SSDP showed that it improved bonding and academic and behavioral outcomes, and decreased aggressive and self-destructive behavior (Hawkins et.al. 2004).

Another program focusing on prevention is the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP). A school-based conflict resolution program originally developed in New York City, children are taught to identify feelings and develop empathy and intercultural understanding for skills in conflict resolution. The program also includes peer mediation, training for parents, training for administrators, and training of trainers. Data on social and emotional learning were collected using child and teacher report assessment. Findings from this program indicate that children whose teachers used the program the most developed more positively than peers who received less or no instruction (Brown et.al, 2004).

Raising Healthy Children is a collaborative effort in Seattle, WA that tries to bond students to school and family. The program is based on research showing that there are risk factors causing children to make bad choices and that there are protective factors preventing bad choices. These protective factors include being socially and emotionally competent, having strong bonds to positive socializing influences, and having healthy beliefs and clear standards (Haggerty & Cummings, 2006). This broad-based, integrated program teaches social and emotional skills in order to prevent problems in adolescence such as antisocial behavior, academic failure, and low commitment to school. There was staff development for teachers and units for children including listening, problem-solving, sharing, anger management, giving compliments, recognizing feelings, and learning manners. Teachers assessed students skills and findings regarding the effectiveness of this program indicated significant changes including: increased positive attachment to family and school, increased scores on standardized achievement tests, and decreased aggression and delinquent behavior (Haggerty & Cummings, 2006).

The PATHS curriculum (promoting alternative thinking strategies) is a comprehensive prevention program for elementary aged children that is intended to improve social and emotional and academic functioning as well as prevent behavior problems. It is taught by regular classroom teachers as an integrated component of the curriculum. A central focus of PATHS is to encourage children to discuss meaningful feelings and experiences. It also focuses on self-control, problem-solving, self-esteem, and peer communications and relationships. The effects of the PATHS curriculum was investigated in multiple settings and shows effectiveness in improving the social competence of children (Greenberg et. al., 2004).

The above description of SEL programs certainly does not cover the extent of programs offered everywhere. Only a representative sample can be included in this paper, and it is assumed that the presence of these programs in published research suggests that they are the largest of the programs currently being offered. It appears that they are mainly oriented toward prevention of problematic behaviors traditionally seen in adolescence. Bonding of the student to the school and family appears as a frequent part of SEL programs. While the programs appear to be effective, they are not developed specifically with the future employee in mind. In other words, the programs are not developed in order to improve future functioning in the workplace per se, yet the skills taught could apply in any setting. Therefore the skills will help when the child is an adult in the workplace.

Some of the areas identified in the EI literature are seen as part of the content and curriculum in SEL programs. For example, self-awareness and recognition of emotions in the self seem to be commonly found in SEL programs. Social awareness, social skills, and empathy also appear to be a common component of SEL training. However, self-management, stress management, and mood regulation do not appear as frequently in SEL training and learning as the skills mentioned above.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Empirical evidence seems to suggest that SEL programs can improve children's success in school and in life. The effective programs have approaches that are comprehensive, multiyear, and include many components that: are based on theory and research, teach children to apply SEL skills, build connections to school, parents and communities, provide instruction that is developmentally and culturally appropriate, are integrated into the curriculum, and involve high-quality teacher development and support.

To adequately prepare children for the future we need to teach a broader range of skills and competencies than is currently addressed in schools. Schools are moving toward a preventative approach to promote student social and emotional development. Researchers seem to agree that the best approach is comprehensive in order to develop a broad range of social and emotional skills that can be generalized to many settings (Fleming & Bay, 2004) and to integrate programs into the curriculum, not as an instructional unit but as a caring learning context that is a comprehensive, multi-year program (Elias, 2004; Lopes & Salovey, 2004).

In order to prepare effective future employees, SEL needs to become a required part of the curriculum; an educational foundation. SEL programs do not improve students' behavior at the expense of academics. They actually improve both behavior and academic performance (Hawkins et.al., 2004). Since teachers are creating and implementing these learning environments, it seems critical to incorporate these skills into teacher preparation curriculum, yet few colleges of education have incorporated it into their programs (Fleming & Bay, 2004). Teachers must be both willing and able to teach and encourage social and emotional development, and model the skills they are trying to teach for increased effectiveness (Hawkins et. al. 2004).

It also seems critical to consider the future workplace needs and incorporate these gaps in the SEL programs. The EI skills seen as having less focus in SEL programs, including self-management, stress management, and mood regulation, are identified in the literature as critical to EI and to success in the workplace (Boyatzis, 1982; Goleman, 1998; Isen, 2001; Mittal and Ross, 1998). Thus the developers of SEL programs should assess whether they are adequately preparing future employees.

### **Implications and Contribution to HRD**

Given that research points to the importance of social and emotional skills for one's career and workplace success, and that companies are significantly investing in EI training, it is important to evaluate the effectiveness and appropriateness of EI training and education. The role of K-12 education is to prepare working adults for the future. This review has identified that certain areas of EI are not developed enough in SEL education, including self-management, stress management, and mood regulation. Thus we can investigate whether working adults are lacking in adequate training in these areas.

Workplace training in EI should address employee needs. In other words, if a company is going to invest a significant amount of money in training and development, it should invest its resources where they are most likely to make a difference - where there are gaps in knowledge. If current employees have not previously learned these skills, we can conclude that these are areas HRD practitioners need to evaluate and further develop in order to fill the gaps of knowledge and help employees be more effective.

Concurrently, if we approach the school as a workplace in itself, those who conduct training and teach the SEL programs benefit from this research because they can become aware of gaps in the social and emotional education of students. Training of teachers in social and emotional needs of the workplace can help them fill in gaps of knowledge and adequately prepare students so they possess all social and emotional skills for work and life success.

As for research in the EI field, this review helps connect research to practice and school-to-work initiatives. Research in the field of EI can inform teachers as to what skills should be taught to and developed in students and what skills need to be taught to the teachers in order for them to help develop said skills in students. It is important that more studies are conducted examining the importance of EI and how it contributes to organizational and individual success. This research will not only inform HRD and organizations of employee needs, but also teachers and developers of SEL programs. In order to enhance the worker of tomorrow, we must examine the education of today.

This study is limited to literature review and would benefit from a future empirical study. While there have been many small-scale studies indicating the effectiveness and value of SEL programs, there could be greater assurance of the effectiveness and potential magnitude of SEL programs, and their contribution to creating high-quality future workers, if large-scale, longitudinal studies were conducted. Large-scale studies would allow for assessment of the contribution of these programs given a variety of demographic differences. In order to accomplish this, some agreement as to the optimal content of these programs is necessary for sake of comparison. Longitudinal studies would provide the opportunity to evaluate the effect of increased social and emotional skills on workplace success. Additional research can continue to identify important EI gaps that can be integrated into teacher training.

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